**Faculty Senate Minutes**

Wednesday, April 21, 2021

Zoom Meeting, 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

**Attending Senators:** Taylor Acee, Rebecca Bell-Metereau, Janet Bezner, Dale Blasingame, Rachel Davenport, Jennifer Jensen, Lynn Ledbetter, Vincent Luizzi, Benjamin Martin, Stan McClellan, Roque Mendez, Andrew Ojede, Michael Supancic, Nicole Wesley

**Guests:** Noel Fuller (Staff Council), Joaquin Palacios, Michel Haigh, Judy Oskam, Scott Pope (Library), Tina Marie Cade (Senate Fellow), Christine Sellers, Ricardo Delgado (University Star), Jeff Helgeson, Mary Brennan, Beth Erhart, Karen Sigler, Aimee Roundtree, J.D. Jamieson, Augustine Agwuele

**Faculty and Staff Morale**

Noel Fuller, Chair, Staff Council met with Faculty Senate to discuss similar themes between faculty and staff suggestions for actions university administration could take to improve employee morale. Additional discussion involved concerns about the administration’s messaging regarding remote work options for staff, where many staff and some senators think the decision to return to campus on June 1, 2021 is based on an arbitrary choice and not driven by data that reflect various scenarios for remote work options or increased productivity. The senate asked Mr. Fuller how senate could support Staff Council. Mr. Fuller suggested that Staff Council would appreciate feedback from the senate on their draft of a framework aimed at identifying how to employ and customize remote work in a sensible and equitable way.

Mr. Fuller also updated the senate on an initiative to secure a position for a staff-specific ombudsman. At present, staff are typically directed to follow the grievance policy, and many are discouraged by the process since they often must take the grievance directly to their supervisor.

**Faculty Handbook Committee Recommendations**

Senators agreed with recommendations from the Faculty Handbook Committee including:

* Continue to improve the interactivity of the handbook – the use of Flipbook this year was a major improvement. Continue to look for an interactive way to present the information rather than a downloadable PDF.
* Provide a link to the handbook on the Info for Faculty/Staff webpage (<https://www.txstate.edu/faculty-and-staff.html>)
* Add information in the handbook under the support services area that provides an intro and link to the Office of Equal Opportunity and Title IX and Inclusion and Diversity.
* Continue to make sure that the links in the handbook that take the reader to the specific policies/procedures are updated and work.
* Continue to use the virtual binder because the information there is easy to find and meets the needs of new faculty/staff.

**Personnel Committee Policy**

Dr. Beth Ehart, member of the Academic Governance Committee, provided an overview of the most recent revision of the draft personnel committee (PC) policy. Senators discussed with the AGC how the draft policy defines faculty who are eligible to serve on a PC and whether they can be voting members or not. Some senators emphasized that the draft policy should include non-tenure line faculty as voting members and that the policy should leave it flexible enough so that departments can decide themselves how to operate their PCs.

A senator pointed out that the use of rank in the policy is problematic because the interpretation of rank varies for different faculty classifications (e.g., Associate Professor versus Associate Professor of Practice) and emphasized that if the term ‘rank’ is used in the PC policy, then rank must be defined and guidelines developed for how rank is applied across classifications.

Another senator voiced concerns about lack of definition of specific terms in the draft policy. Dr. Erhart explained that many of the definitions are dependent on existing policy statements. Dr. Erhart encouraged the senate to survey faculty about their views on who should be a voting member of the PC and possibly hold a referendum to determine if the definition of faculty voter should be revised. A senator suggested that such a survey should inquire about how PCs operate and include a mechanism to solicit feedback about how equity can be achieved among PCs. Some senators pointed out that the full faculty may not be ready to be surveyed since it is a complex topic.

A senator suggested moving forward by modifying some content in the current draft policy while retaining the positive, agreed upon sections to see how it is received but with the full understanding that the policy will likely need additional modifications and improvements in the future.

**Discussion of Academic Freedom Policy**

Senator Luizzi provided a summary of the feedback Dr. Thorne provided during the April 14, 2021 senate meeting. Senators discussed who should be assigned the senior reviewer of the policy and considered the advantages and disadvantages of having the Faculty Senate versus the Provost be the senior reviewer for the policy. Senate Chair Bezner will inquire as to whether a policy can have co-senior reviewers.

**Inclusion of Faculty Senators on College Councils**

Senate Chair Bezner polled senators on whether their colleges have guidelines about faculty senate inclusion on College Councils and if senators ever attend those meetings. Senators from two colleges communicated that they attend meetings and are non-voting members. A senator conveyed that participation in their council meetings has been beneficial for both themselves and the administrators.

**Faculty Senate Fellow applications**

Senate Chair Bezner solicited volunteers to serve as reviewers and select Faculty Senate Fellow applications. Senators Davenport, Jensen, and Ledbetter volunteered to serve.

**Announcement regarding Restorative Justice process**
Senator Ledbetter will serve as the senate liaison for the next step in the Restorative Justice process.

**Policy Review**

AA PPS 02.03.01 Conduct and Planning of Courses, due April 23 (pen and ink changes related to the AFC suggestions discussed a few weeks ago). Senator Luizzi

AA PPS 02.02.01 Enrollment Management in Academic Departments, due May 4. Senator Ojede

**Adoption of Minutes**

Senator voted to adopt the minutes of the

**Executive Session**

Senators voted to endorse the recommendations for NLF Part time Teaching Awards.

Meeting adjourned at 6:09 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Jennifer Jensen